

'Momentum' Is What U.S. Hopes to Gain at Vienna Summit Meeting

By Fred Barnes
Washington Star Staff Writer

The word for the summit meeting in Vienna between President Carter and Soviet Communist Party Chief Leonid I. Brezhnev is "momentum."

The new strategic arms limitation treaty, SALT II, will be signed, but nothing tangible like a pact or a final agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union is expected on other matters. What American officials hope for is "some momentum."

There is, said one official, no reason for "excessive expectations. . . . We're not postulating this summit will fundamentally alter relationships" between the two nations.

Why no breakthrough on a comprehensive ban on testing nuclear weapons or an agreement to bar killer satellites or a pact to demilitarize the Indian Ocean or some vivid progress in trimming troop levels in Central Europe?

Part of the problem is how each side views the summit. For the Soviets, it is largely ceremonial. Brezhnev, aged and ailing, will read from prepared statements at most of the sessions with Carter.

For Carter and his aides, a summit is a chance to make headway in furthering detente with the Soviet Union. But they don't have great hopes for the formal talks, especially since they will be conducted with time-consuming consecutive translations.

SO THEY ARE cautiously looking for something spontaneous to happen. Carter and Brezhnev will sit side-by-side at dinner on Saturday and Sunday evenings, for instance, with no formal agenda to discuss.

Moreover, they will meet alone (only accompanied by their personal translators) on Monday morning to discuss bilateral issues. Nothing immediate might result, but officials suggested that their might be some good developments — ultimately.

That is what occurred at the 1967 summit session between President Lyndon Johnson and Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. Nothing overt and dramatic emerged from that meeting, but it had "a longer-term impact on the thinking of both sides," leading to the first SALT agreement, an official noted.

Finally, there is limited hope that informal conversations between

subordinates of Carter and Brezhnev will generate something beneficial to U.S.-Soviet relations.

The president, who arrives in Vienna tomorrow night and returns to Washington on Monday evening, is taking along with him Defense Secretary Harold Brown, Gen. David C. Jones, disarmament director George Seignious, national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell, among others.

BREZHNEV ALSO has a large entourage, including Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, Defense Minister Dmitri Ustinov and Konstantin Chernyenko, a Politburo member. The presence of Chernyenko has prompted speculation that he may become Brezhnev's designated heir as Soviet party chief.

So what might the summit bring? Four things, an official said: the signing of SALT II; some movement in other arms control negotiations; mutual understanding on matters of disagreement so that misinterpretations might be averted, and expanded communications between the two governments.

Carter has long advocated regular summit sessions for general discussions, but the Soviets have held recently to the idea of having them for a specific purpose, like signing SALT II. But there is hope that "some understanding on consultative exchanges" can be arranged, along with a "joint expression" about expanded contacts, an official said.

The supposed improvement in Brezhnev's health (he is 72) is "a welcome development," the American official said, but much at the summit seems to be set up to mask his decrepitude.

THE MORNING sessions on Saturday and Sunday will begin at 11 a.m., suggesting it takes Brezhnev considerable time to get rolling in the morning. The afternoon sessions will start at 5:30 p.m., after Brezhnev's nap.

And the toasts at the dinners will not be aired publicly — no reporters allowed and no broadcast of them, only printed statements. This indicates that the Russians are afraid that Brezhnev's speaking style, if thick-tongued and halting, might prove embarrassing.

Brezhnev, American officials said,

with. He is "not nasty," one said, and he doesn't throw tantrums, which Nikita Khrushchev was known for. He often makes a point through barbed humor, aimed at some person.

But the officials downplayed the role of personal diplomacy at the summit. "Summits are not an exercise in personal diplomacy," said one official. They involve "systemic diplomacy," based on the long-developed relationship between the two nations.

CARTER, THOUGH, has learned an immense amount about Brezhnev; he has even watched a videotape of a Brezhnev speech. Today, he was to study the transcript of a chat between Brezhnev and American envoy Averell Harriman.

Last weekend at Camp David, the president pored over a briefing book on the issues for the summit, and he came back to Washington asking for more information, aides said.

In addition, he has talked to many world leaders — most recently German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt — about their dealings with the Soviet leader. He has also been briefed by the CIA.

The president has been warned, however, not to read too much into his conversations with Brezhnev. So, he will "avoid drawing conclusions" about his adversary, an official said, for this could lead to miscalculations and misjudgments later.